

the transition into first winter plumage (Amer. Mus. No. 29612, ♀, Arizona, Nov. 1; No. 56538, ♂, Mexico, Sept. 19, and others).

First Winter Plumage, acquired by a complete postjuvinal moult excepting the two distal primaries.

One male is in nearly full plumage (Amer. Mus. No. 35225, Arizona, November 20), the first and second primaries full grown, the third one half and the remainder of the series new except one or two of the proximal secondaries. Males assume the rich and beautiful plumage of the adult, now first being distinctly differentiated from the females which are streaked and spotted and decidedly pinkish.

First Nuptial Plumage.—There is a limited prenuptial moult as shown by specimens in Mr. Geo. B. Sennett's series.

Subsequent plumages are only repetitions of those already described.

(To be concluded.)

REPORT OF THE A. O. U. COMMITTEE ON PROTECTION OF NORTH AMERICAN BIRDS.

THE YEAR just passed has been a most important one to those interested in the furthering of bird protection, particularly to the members of your Committee.

During the years 1896 and 1897, largely through the personal efforts of Mr. Wm. Dutcher, then chairman of this Committee, the cause of bird protection was brought prominently before women's clubs and similar organizations in all parts of the country, with a view to arousing a general interest in the subject and bringing it to the attention of the general public. The success which attended these efforts was shown in Mr. Dutcher's reports and in the voluminous correspondence of your Committee during the year covered by our last report. Audubon Societies, organized for bird protection and the encouragement of bird study, have sprung up on every hand, and nearly every

person in touch with the public press is to-day acquainted with the movement for the protection of wild birds and their exclusion from millinery. The matter has also extended to the schools with most encouraging results.

While we cannot expect immediate success in all our efforts for bird protection, the arousal and extension of this sentiment will ultimately accomplish the desired end, and even to-day so widespread is the interest in wild bird life that no serious outrage can be perpetrated without arousing a host of protests.

So rapid had been the growth of the Audubon Societies, and so great the demand upon your Committee, that we recommended in the last report the establishment of a magazine which should be the organ of these societies and serve as a means of keeping the immense membership in touch with their work. The idea was realized almost at once by the appearance of 'Bird-Lore,' ably edited by Frank M. Chapman, which has fully justified the highest expectations of its advocates. The Audubon Society department, under the direction of Mrs. Mabel Osgood Wright, serves to unite these organizations and forms, as it were, a central bureau of information upon this line of work. This relieves your Committee of a great burden of correspondence which it must soon have been quite unable to attend to, and permits it to turn its attention to general matters which belong more strictly to its scope.

We may therefore refer those interested in the Audubon Societies to the pages of 'Bird-Lore,' merely saying that these organizations have continued to increase both in influence and membership, and that since our last report additional State Societies have been established in Tennessee, Texas, and California.

The establishment of a central publication office for Audubon Society literature is still as much desired as ever; but unfortunately no serious attempt has as yet been made in this direction. The inclination seems stronger than ever and we trust that some definite steps will be taken at an early date.

Probably at no time since the organization of the Audubon Societies has there been such a general use of birds in millinery as during the present winter, which is another evidence of the difficulty of common sense producing any effect upon fashion. Nevertheless the protest against birds in millinery was never so

strong, especially among the rising generation, and the growing feeling on all sides that it is vulgar and in bad taste to wear birds, will inevitably make the present fashion one of short duration. Notwithstanding this, however, efforts are being constantly made by dealers to obtain birds from various parts of this country, especially where it can be done without breaking the laws.

Information has reached your Committee of large quantities of Grebe breasts collected in western America, and of offers which have been made to fishermen along the New England coast to enlist their services in collecting Terns.

The recent demand for single quills has resulted in the slaughter of innumerable Hawks, Owls, Eagles, and Pelicans, and now the demand is largely supplied from the Turkey Vulture, one of the most useful and at the same time most disgusting birds that we have.

Mr. Wm. Palmer of our Committee writes me that numbers of these birds are trapped not far from Washington, D. C. They are decoyed with the carcasses of dead animals, and caught in a barrel arranged in such a way that when a Vulture alights on the side he is precipitated into it. The quills are then pulled out and the bird allowed to run. In many cases so many feathers are taken that the bird is unable to fly and probably dies.

These instances of collecting for the millinery trade in our own country serve to emphasize the need of more stringent laws for the protection of birds, and their strict enforcement. This seems to be the only means of checking the millinery collectors.

The old stories that plume hunters do not use guns but collect Egret plumes which have been cast off by the birds, and that in certain remote parts of the world Egrets are actually farmed(!) have been recently revived and published in journals where they have attracted widespread attention, and seriously hindered the work of the Audubon Societies. We need only say that there is no foundation for either statement. Any ornithologist who knows the habits of the Egret or any person who has visited their haunts will testify to the absurdity of these stories.

During the past year your chairman has taken up another matter of great importance, the question of excessive collecting of birds, and more especially of eggs, for alleged scientific purposes.

Without wishing to object in the slightest to the collecting of such specimens as are needed for scientific purposes, or for even small collections as assistance to field work, a protest was made in the last annual report against excessive collecting as a business, or on the part of those who collect merely for the sake of having a large collection, and contribute little or nothing to our knowledge of birds. For the benefit of young bird students, who are often influenced by dealers in their ideas of what constitutes ornithology, a circular was prepared on the above lines in which were combined the opinions of the ornithologists of all the larger scientific institutions of the East. Ten thousand of these were published, with the generous assistance of the Pennsylvania Audubon Society, and distributed in all parts of the country. This circular, and the stand taken by your committee, has been endorsed by all the ornithological journals of America, and ornithologists generally, and its beneficial effect is already in evidence.

From the reports of the various members of your committee for the past year, I quote the following:—

Mr. Dutcher of our committee reports that he endeavored to proceed against dealers in native cage birds in New York City, but failed, owing to the impossibility to prove that the birds were actually trapped in New York, the dealers claiming that they were secured in Florida.

Mrs. Robins reports great success in interesting constables in the enforcement of the game and bird laws. In many States it is possible to have constables appointed as special game wardens, and if the matter is properly explained to them, the pecuniary benefits are quite sufficient inducement to enlist their assistance in the cause of bird protection. True sportsmen do not break game or bird laws, and the punishment of a few promiscuous shooters will soon suppress an objectionable class.

Mrs. Olive Thorne Miller reports increasing interest in popular bird study in every part of the country that she has visited, and in many schools where the children are specially instructed in observing wild birds.

Miss Florence A. Merriam especially emphasizes this last fact, and considers the instruction of teachers in the rudiments of popular ornithology a most important work.

Dr. T. S. Palmer reports the enactment of a new game law in the District of Columbia, March 3, 1899, which increased the penalty for killing insectivorous birds, and provided for the inspection of cold storage rooms under certain restrictions. He also reports the successful organization of classes for ornithological instruction among the school teachers of Washington, which were conducted by himself and Mr. H. C. Oberholser, with the coöperation of Prof. Wm. B. Powell, superintendent of schools. The Biological Survey has also done most valuable educational work in the distribution of papers and circulars on Economic Ornithology.

Mr. A. W. Anthony reports that a recent visit to Magdalena Bay, Lower California, shows the almost total destruction of the Herons by plume hunters and native Indians. This work was begun some four years ago, as previously reported, and the encouragement of plume collecting among the Indians has proved most disastrous. Mr. Anthony reports that the extensive sheep grazing in Plumas County, Cal., and elsewhere on the Sierra Nevada, seems to result in the extermination of the Sooty Grouse, Plumed Partridge, and other ground birds, as the sheep trample both young and nests under foot. Furthermore, the sheep-herders burn the underbrush over large tracts, and thus work great havoc on the birds. Though this is against the law, it is almost impossible to prevent it for lack of definite evidence.

This instance is quite parallel to the destruction by fire of vast tracts of lumbered regions or bark peelings in the forests of Pennsylvania and other States, and the almost total destruction of the forest-loving birds which formerly abounded there and would doubtless remain were the tracts allowed to grow up properly protected from fire.

Visits to the Pennsylvania lumber regions during 1898 and 1899 deeply impressed your chairman with the importance of the work of the Forestry Commissions and its close association with the question of bird protection.

Mrs. Stevenson reports that during the past winter, when an unusual influx of Robins occurred in Arkansas, the gunners turned out in numbers, and though many birds were killed the first day, the arrest and conviction of a dozen or so of the would-be

'sportsmen' completely checked the slaughter in the vicinity of Helena.

In Washington, D. C., Dr. T. S. Palmer reports the arrest of one of the principal game-dealers for selling Robins, which has resulted in stopping the traffic in that city to a great extent.

Mr. Geo. H. Mackay, although resigned from the Committee, has continued his excellent work in the interests of bird protection in Massachusetts, both in looking after the Terns on the islands and in legislative work. His most encouraging report is an evidence of what can be done by a competent person who has the interest of bird protection so much at heart. His report is here appended.

"In the matter of legislation something has been gained; one very important law has been enacted which is already showing good results, viz., 'That every Lord's day shall be close season; whoever hunts, kills or destroys game or birds of any kind on the Lord's day shall be liable to the penalties imposed for the violation of the law during other close seasons, and such penalties shall be in addition to those already imposed for the violation of the laws relating to shooting upon the Lord's day.' Still another law has been passed creating for five years a large reservation within the limits of the town of Essex, Mass., within which birds and animals are protected. In addition a most vicious marketmen's bill was defeated after a hard contest, as also another bill which sought to extend the open season on the Mergansers, or Sheldrakes. Five other protective bills, including my own, failed to secure favorable legislation, although a strong effort, accompanied by forcible and exhaustive arguments, was made in their behalf. There is no necessity, however, for the abandonment of the effort on this account, for it is visible to those who can read the handwriting on the wall that it is only a question of time when such protective bills will be successful, and while some of those who are at present engaged in the work may not see the realization, they are, nevertheless, preparing the ground and paving the way for those who may follow them. In all of the above bills I have taken an active part, being present and speaking for better protection.

"The Terns and Laughing Gulls domiciled during the breeding

season in Massachusetts have been well cared for, as usual, and although I understand an unusually large number of these birds has been killed during the past year for millinery purposes and decoration, I can safely state that *not one* has been taken for such purposes on any of the islands under my care. Owing to the continued disability of Mr. John Sandsbury, I was obliged at the last moment to find another person to fill the position of special police officer for the Muskeget group of islands. Mr. Edward E. Snow of Nantucket was selected, and was considerably appointed by the town of Nantucket to protect the birds during the past season. As might be expected, the result continues to show increasing numbers of Terns and Laughing Gulls in this locality, and each year an earlier date of arrival would seem to indicate their impatience to reach this secure breeding resort. When I look back to former years, and compare their situation then with what it is at present, I am sure we shall have no complaints from the birds' standpoint.

“On Penikese Island, in Buzzards Bay, Mass., the owners, Messrs. Homer Bros., have extended the same courtesy and aid to me as heretofore in furthering my plans, and it gives me much pleasure to acknowledge such indispensable help.

“Early in the year an effort was made by a society called the ‘American Bird Restorers,’ to reduce the numbers of House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) in Boston. I took no part in this movement. The effort met with widespread opposition and resistance, and the daily newspapers were teeming for weeks with literature on the subject. Little was accomplished, however, as far as a diminution of birds was concerned, and after the excitement waned the matter became quiescent. It brought out one fact, however, viz., that even the most despised birds have hosts of friends and protectors ready to champion their cause, regardless of merit.”

In conclusion your Committee may say that with the establishment of the Audubon Societies and ‘Bird-Lore’ their work has been materially relieved, but they still stand as a central committee for the diffusion of information on any subjects upon which they may be consulted, and would especially urge upon the members of the Union the importance of their assistance in taking

advantage of every opportunity of securing the passage of good bird laws, and the enforcement of the same; and in the instruction of those who are in a position to encourage bird study among the children, and in directing young ornithologists into the true paths of ornithological research.

Respectfully submitted,

WITMER S. JONE,
Chairman.

SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS OF THE AMERICAN ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION.

THE SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS of the American Ornithologists' Union convened in Philadelphia, Pa., Monday evening, November 13, 1899. The business meeting was held in the Council Room, and the public sessions, commencing Tuesday, November 14, and lasting three days, were held in the lecture hall of the Academy of Natural Sciences.

BUSINESS SESSION.—The meeting was called to order by Vice-President Merriam, in the absence of the President, Prof. Robert Ridgway. Sixteen active members were present. The Secretary's report gave the membership of the Union at the opening of the present Congress as 744, constituted as follows: Active, 48; Honorary, 17; Corresponding, 66; Associate, 613.

During the year the Union lost forty-six members—four by death, thirteen by resignation, and twenty-nine were dropped for non-payment of dues. The members lost by death were John Cordeaux,¹ a Corresponding member, who died at Lincoln, England, August 1, 1899, in the 69th year of his age; also Oliver Marcy,² LL. D., Dean of Northwestern University, who died at Evanston, Ill., March 19, 1899, aged 79; Major Joshua L. Fowler,³ U. S. A., who died on board the Steamer 'Ella,' July 11,

¹ For an obituary notice, see *Auk*, XVI, pp. 377, 378.

² For an obituary notice, see *Ibid.*, p. 211.

³ For an obituary notice, see *Ibid.*, p. 377.